Equality and Diversity Policy

Thurston Parish Council

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INTRODUCTION

Thurston Parish Council ("Council") is committed to ensuring that, in the exercise of its functions, it fulfils it legal responsibilities under all legislation concerning equality and diversity and does not engage in unlawful discrimination within the Council (including staff, councillors, volunteers and contractors and in the delivery of its service to the public.

The Council will actively develop positive practices which promote equality of opportunity and enable residents and customers to fully participate and staff to realise their full potential. No resident, customer, job applicant or employee will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of gender, race, colour, creed, nationality, ethnic or national origin, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, marital status, or will be disadvantaged by any condition which cannot be justified.

This policy is intended to assist the council to put this commitment into practice. Compliance with this policy should also ensure that employees do not commit unlawful acts of discrimination.

LEGISLATION

It is unlawful, in relation to the Equality Act 2010 to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment because of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality, caste and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, or because someone is married or in a civil partnership. These are known as "protected characteristics".

Discrimination after employment may also be unlawful, e.g. refusing to give a reference for a reason related to one of the protected characteristics.

The council will not discriminate against or harass a member of the public in the provision of services or goods. It is unlawful to fail to make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to using services caused by disability. The duty to make reasonable adjustments includes the removal, adaptation or alteration of physical features, if the physical features make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of services. In addition, service providers have an obligation to think ahead and address any barriers that may impede disabled people from accessing a service.

The Council will ensure that all decisions on participation, recruitment, selection, training, promotion and career development are based on abilities, merits, and objective job-related criteria.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN EMPLOYMENT

The council will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, discipline and selection for redundancy.

The council will comply with its obligations in relation to statutory requests for contract variations. The council may also make reasonable adjustments to its standard working practices to overcome barriers caused by disability.

The council has a separate dignity at work policy concerning issues of bullying and harassment on any ground, and how complaints of this type will be dealt with.

The council has a separate grievance policy and procedure for staff members to make a complaint if they feel they are being unlawfully discriminated against.

PEOPLE NOT EMPLOYED BY THE COUNCIL

The council will not discriminate unlawfully against those using or seeking to use services offered by the council.

Any bullying or harassment by suppliers, visitors or others should be reported to the council who will take appropriate action.

COMMITMENTS

Thurston Parish Council is committed to:

- Promoting equality of opportunity for all persons.
- Promoting a good and harmonious learning environment in which all men and women are treated with respect and dignity and in which no form of intimidation or harassment is tolerated.
- Preventing occurrences of unlawful direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Fulfilling all its legal obligations under the equality legislation and associated codes of practice.
- Complying with its own equal opportunities policy and associated policies.
- Taking lawful affirmative or positive action, where appropriate.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Chairman and all members of the Council have the responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy. All members are expected to create the equality environment, which is its objective.

In order to implement this policy, the Council undertakes to:

- Communicate the policy to members by issuing a copy of this document to all its members.
- Where appropriate, the Council will endeavour through appropriate training to ensure that it will not consciously or unconsciously discriminate in the selection or recruitment of applicants for membership of the Council.
- Incorporate specific and appropriate duties in respect of implementing the equal opportunities policy into roles and responsibilities of the Council.
- Incorporate equal opportunities notices into general communications practices.
- Ensure that adequate resources are made available to fulfil the objectives of the policy.

MISCONDUCT

Acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation’s grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, or by way of Code of Conduct complaint as appropriate, in relevant circumstances and any appropriate action will be taken.

The Council reserves the right to take steps to protect employees in cases of inappropriate behaviour to them, including by councillors and members of the public.

In the case of councillor misconduct in this respect, complaints may be made to the District Council Monitoring Officer, under the Council’s Code of Conduct.

The Council has a corporate Complaints Procedure.

Sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights/Code of Conduct and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Parish Council will establish appropriate and monitoring systems to assist the effective implementation of its equal opportunities policy. The effectiveness of the equality and diversity policy will be reviewed annually, and remedial action will be taken as necessary.